

Despair and Hope--Chapter 13

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Category: Titanic
Language: English
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2000-05-09 09:00:00
Updated: 2000-05-09 09:00:00
Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:30:52
Rating: T
Chapters: 1
Words: 1,612
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Rose decides to rebel against Cal and her mother.

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Rose stared blankly at the wall, ignoring the sun that now shone brilliantly through the window, casting its colorful rays on the walls and highlighting her hair in its radiance. Rose hated it. She longed for the storms of the day before. The sunlight seemed to mock her and her entire situation.

She longed for Jack. More than ever, she longed for his comforting arms. She longed for him to tell her that everything would be okay. But then she remembered that Jack was dead, and she would sink back into the depths of her sorrow.

She had dreamed of Jack again the night before, but it wasn't a pleasant or comforting dream. It had been another nightmare. She'd had many of those since Cal brought her here.

Sometimes she dreamed of their daughter--of Jackie being ripped out of her arms. No matter how she cried and screamed and pleaded and fought to hold on, no one seemed to recognize her despair, and no one seemed to care. Not even her own mother, who pretended almost convincingly.

It was after these days that Rose would close her eyes and be on the Titanic with Jack. For a single moment in time, Rose had experienced happiness. Jack gave that to her. But fate tore it away from her when the ship struck the iceberg. When Jack died, she carried sorrow with her, but also hope--the hope of a life filled with freedom and

choices.

But then, fate took that away from her as well, in the form of a vengeful and desperate Caledon Hockley. Jack was gone. Freedom was gone. And soon, her last link to Jack--their daughter--would be gone as well.

Rose's eyes snapped open suddenly.

No. That would never happen. If she had to kill Cal, she could never allow that.

For the first time in days, Rose stood up on wobbly legs from her bed with a renewed sense of determination. She slipped on the fresh robe that Kathryn, the new servant, had brought her. Vaguely, Rose found herself missing Trudy. Growing up, Trudy had been more than a servant, but a friend. She had really been the only person Rose could talk to, except for her father. But all the people Rose had loved and confided in were gone now, leaving her alone. Now she had to trust in herself.

Sometimes, she found herself wanting to talk to her mother. But she knew that Ruth would never accept Rose Dawson. As good as Ruth's intentions may be, she was too corrupted to ever understand her daughter's true nature. Ruth thought her to be a sick child who needed to be taken care of.

Rose slipped on her new slippers and glided to the door. Opening it slowly, as not to make any more sound than necessary, Rose peered down the hallway. She could hear voices from one of the far rooms, and she recognized one as being Cal's. The other voice, she was pretty sure was that of Ruth.

She glanced down the other hallway to make sure there was no one around before drifting in the direction of Cal's rooms. As she drifted closer, the voices become more clearly.

"--pawed the damned engagement ring. And she refuses to tell me where the Heart is. She says she doesn't even have it, that it must have slipped out of the pocket when she was in the water."

"Watch your language, Mr. Hockley. She may be perfectly well telling the truth."

Silence followed this exchange, and Rose pressed her ear against the door.

Finally Cal spoke again. "That may be so, Ruth, but even so, she has caused us a lot of trouble. No, that gutter rat she fancied has caused us this trouble. To think that she allowed him to . . . impregnate her . . . why, it's unspeakable."

Rose heard Ruth snort indignantly. "It didn't help that you decided to chase them through the ship with a gun. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Caledon."

She heard Cal clear his throat. "Admittedly, my actions were in . . . questionable taste. I was angry, Ruth. I lost control. I loved her. I love her even now. I felt . . . betrayed."

Rose sank back against the door, eyes shut tight. She wasn't sure if his words were sincere, but they stung her nevertheless. Maybe Cal did care for her in his own cold, upper-society way. But that did not change the fact that he tried to have Jack killed, and might have killed her in the process.

And that certainly did not change the fact that Cal thought of her as his property.

The silence that followed was cut short by Cal's next words. "I've contacted my father," he said, referring to Nathan Hockley of Pittsburgh. "He's the only one I've spoken to about our delicate situation. He informed me that he knows of a way to deal with the problem. After six more months, we will be able to make the news of Rose's safe return public. If word of her illegitimate pregnancy ever gets out . . . "

"It would ruin all our reputations," Ruth finished for him. That would be the ultimate downward spiral from society.

"If that damned piece of filth had kept his grubby hands off my fiancée . . . "

"She thought she was in love," Ruth said quietly. "But she's young. She will outgrow her headstrong ideals and quit dreaming. After she once again becomes acquainted with our way of life, she will forget about her foolish affair with that steerage boy. And she will be thankful that her life isn't ruined by the shame and embarrassment that having his child would be."

"I certainly hope she comes to her senses," Caledon said with a sigh. "She's hardly eaten a thing since she came here. She's unusually pale and she's getting thinner. Ruth, she has to get out of that bed . . . "

Rose heard no more. Her head was spinning as she made her way back to the bedroom. Somehow, the walk back seemed longer. She had to force herself from falling over as she stepped into her room.

Ignoring her racing heart and pounding temples, she rushed into the bathroom. Rummaging in the drawers, she found what she was looking for. A pair of ornately decorated, metal scissors, with jewel studs imbedded in the designs.

Rose snorted in disgust. She seemed to be doing a lot of that these days. Everything in the upper class was 'ornately decorated.' Even something as simple as scissors--something you cut things with.

Without further thought, she flopped down in the chair in front of the vanity. More ornately decorated things in an ornately decorated townhouse, like all the other ones. Angrily, she wiped her arm across the vanity, spilling make-up and perfumes and other such nonsense.

She stared at her reflection. Her eyes, like she had noticed on Cal, had dark rings. Her cheeks were noticeably thinner, with no trace of color. And her normally full, pouty lips were a tight line across her face. Even her hair looked dead--the red strands hanging limply about her face and shoulders. The large bruise across her cheekbone from

the night before was shamefully obvious. But she had no intention of trying to hide it.

She winced as she thought about what had almost taken place the night before. Cal had been angry, hurt, drunk, and aroused. A dangerous combination.

With trembling fingers, she picked up the ridiculous scissors. She looked back into the mirror, at her own eyes reflected in the glass.

They thought she would happily pick up where she left off. They expected her to marry the cowardly, pompous, and arrogant Caledon Hockley. They expected her to forget about Jack and happiness and freedom and her daughter, and everything she had experienced while in Chippewa Falls.

They expected her to forget about her promise and her dreams and future. They expected her to forget about it all for the sake of social status.

Not in this lifetime.

Gingerly, Rose picked up a thick strand of her red and held it between the scissors' twin blades. "This is for you, Jack. To making it count." They were fools if they thought she would happily accept what they were doing to her. They were fools if they thought she intended to cooperate. She would show them just how headstrong and rebellious Rose Dawson really could be.

Without further hesitation, she began chopping her hair. Her face showed no emotions as she did so, and when she was finally done, her red strands were crimson piles at her feet.

She studied herself in the reflection. She smiled then, with much satisfaction. There. Her first step in rebelling. "Hello, Rose Dawson," she whispered at her reflection.

She stood up carefully from the chair. "Come on, Jackie," she whispered toward her belly. "Let's go get something to eat, shall we? We will need our strength."

\*Don't worry,\* she thought as she changed into the simplest dress she could find in the wardrobe. \*I won't let them take you away.\*

As she once again entered the hallway, this time with an air of confidence, Rose could almost feel Jack, like she had many times in the past. She could practically feel the warm sensation of his love. She could feel him smiling at her. It was almost as if he were saying, "That's my Rose."

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Chapter 13 coming soon!

Please review! =)

End
file.